

Erdo?an government in Turkey dismisses CHP's provincial leadership in Istanbul, deploying massive police forces

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The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an has entered a new phase of its judicial operation targeting fundamental democratic rights and the Kemalist (CHP), which emerged as the leading party in the March 2024 local elections. This operation, targeting the CHP's elected mayors, reached its peak in March with the arrest of Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor and the party's presidential candidate Ekrem ?mamo?lu on "corruption" charges, sparking mass protests.

On September 2, the Istanbul 45th Civil Court of First Instance issued an interim ruling that the CHP Istanbul provincial administration, elected two years ago, should be "provisionally" removed from office. A five-member trustee board was appointed to the Istanbul Provincial Administration, with former MP and one of the former CHP administrators, Gürsel Tekin, as chair. This decision came ahead of another hearing on September 15 regarding the cancellation of the congress that elected the CHP central administration, on the grounds that "the election was tainted". At the congress held in November 2023, Özgür Özel defeated the former party leader, Kemal K?l?çdaro?lu.

The Socialist Equality Group and the *World Socialist Web Site*, despite their irreconcilable political differences, oppose the appointment of a trustee to the Istanbul administration of the CHP and the threat to remove its elected leadership as an attack on fundamental democratic rights. The right to vote and be elected, and the current, extremely limited multi-party democratic politics, are under threat. However, this attack, which essentially stems from the crisis of the global capitalist system and bourgeois rule, can only be stopped by building a working-class movement that is completely independent of the CHP, which is part of and defends this system.

Following Tekin's announcement that he would come

to the Istanbul provincial office on Monday to take up his post, CHP members gathered in front of the provincial building on Sunday evening to protest the appointment of a trustee. Party members were met with a police blockade and prevented from entering the building of their own party. While many people were detained, the Istanbul Governor's Office imposed a four-day ban on rallies, marches, and events in six districts. Arbitrary restrictions were also imposed on messaging and social media applications, and dozens of social media users were detained.

On Monday, Tekin arrived at the CHP Istanbul provincial office, where police had surrounded the area and attacked protesters with pepper spray, and entered the building accompanied by hundreds of police officers.

CHP Chairman Özgür Özel said in a statement Monday, "A process has been initiated to coup the future ruling party and the next president. March 19 [Ekrem ?mamo?lu's arrest] is the day this became concrete. For 173 days, a coup against Turkey's future has been ongoing, and we are resisting it. That is why they are attacking our party. They are sending police to our provincial office. I am addressing Erdo?an: You are throwing the nation into the fire for your own interests. Is it worth it? You will go down in schoolbooks as a coup leader."

The imprisoned ?mamo?lu stated, "There is no internal conflict within the CHP; there is a clear intervention by the ruling power against the CHP through judicial and police force."

Meanwhile, faced with the threat of the CHP leadership under Özel being removed from office at the September 15 hearing, over 900 delegates, the majority of those who attended the 2023 congress, applied for an extraordinary congress to be held on September 21. The CHP also

applied to hold the Istanbul Provincial Congress on September 24.

Efforts to use the government's influence over the judiciary to portray the CHP as criminals began last October with the appointment of Akın Gürlek as Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor. Gürlek had previously served as Deputy Minister of Justice in the Erdoğan government.

The intensifying political crisis and the building up of a dictatorship in Turkey are integral to the global rise of authoritarian and far-right tendencies. The inauguration of the fascist President Donald Trump in the US, and his attempts to establish a presidential dictatorship that serves the interests of the financial oligarchy, have inspired and emboldened similar tendencies in Turkey and around the world.

On the same days that the CHP's Istanbul provincial administration was unlawfully removed from office and police were deployed to the region, nearly 900 anti-genocide protesters were detained in Britain, and Trump threatened to send military troops to Chicago after already doing so in Washington DC.

The increasing political pressure exerted by the Erdoğan government stems from the objective requirements of the ruling class. The building up of a police state, which has been reinforced for years with the support of the CHP, primarily targeting the Kurdish movement and the "left" opposition, is escalating in 2025 with Trump's arrival in office. This occurred amid intensifying war in the Middle East (in which Turkey is deeply involved), an ongoing NATO war with Russia, and severe austerity measures against the working class at home.

At the same time, both the Kurdish nationalist DEM Party and the CHP and their pseudo-left supporters are helping to present this as an effort toward "peace and democratization" by participating in the commission established by the Erdoğan government in parliament as part of its attempt to negotiate with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). In reality, the Ankara-PKK agreement represents a reactionary effort by the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisie to reconcile their interests in alliance with the US in the Middle East's war of redivision.

It is impossible for the CHP, which is under pressure from the Erdoğan government, to consistently defend democratic rights and respond to this attack in a progressive manner. The reason for this is that the CHP, like Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP), is a pro-imperialist, right-wing bourgeois party.

During the protests in March, Özel addressed Keir

Starmer's Labour Party, which heads Britain's most right-wing government and has abolished fundamental democratic rights by declaring the anti-genocide movement in Gaza criminal, saying, "We feel abandoned... How is this friendship, how is this a sister party? How is this on defending democracy together?"

Özel, in an interview with CNN around the same time, defended NATO imperialism, the force behind Israel's genocide in Gaza and the war against Russia in Ukraine, stating, "We support a strong alliance with NATO."

The CHP leader said in an interview with the *Financial Times* Tuesday that if the government's pressure politics intensify, "we can carry out peaceful but effective acts of civil disobedience that will bring life in Turkey to a standstill. We have the power to bring together not millions, but tens of millions of people."

Millions, even tens of millions, of workers and youth in Turkey are ready to take action against the Erdoğan government's police state repression and social attacks, as demonstrated by the protests in March. However, just as much as Erdoğan, the CHP and its allies in the union bureaucracy, who ended this movement, fear a mass working-class movement targeting the capitalist system—the source of dictatorship—and are fundamentally opposed to it.

The CHP, which is deeply tied to NATO, follows the same policies as the Erdoğan government in the municipalities it runs, opposes strikes with violence and is incapable of waging the struggle for democracy which requires opposition to imperialism and austerity. Therefore, the critical task is to ensure the political clarification of the working class, which is the social base of this struggle, and to build the mobilization of the working class, independent of all capitalist parties, including the CHP, against the authoritarian regime, austerity, and imperialist war, based on an international socialist program. This means the building of the Socialist Equality Party.



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